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CIA: Unobtrusive Neighbor

Complex, Employees Blend Into Va. Suburb

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If you want to see the Central Intelligence Agency's headquarters, go to Pizza Supreme on Old Chain Bridge Road in McLean. Sketched on one wall there is a cartoonist's view of the agency's massive headquarters that are hidden two miles away in the Virginia woodside.

There are some obvious flaws in the drawing: the cartoon building is too tall and is topped by the letters "CIA." But none of the restaurant's customers—many of them CIA employees—has ever complained to pizza shop owner Mike Mansy.

The drawing and the customers' silence are among the few reminders in Fairfax County of something the CIA would just as soon have everyone forget: both its headquarters and a good number of the CIA's estimated work force of 15,000 are nestled away among all

the other backyard-barbecueing and lawn-tending suburbanites.

Aside from a half dozen highway signs directing traffic to the CIA complex and a noontime crowd that suddenly appears at a small delicatessen called the McLean Restaurant, there are few other outward (or "overt," as the CIA operatives would say) signs that the nation's spy center is located in the Langley countryside.

"There is nothing... The agency could be in Timbuctoo," said William Ladson, principal at McLean High School.

Fourteen years after the CIA deserted most of its downtown Washington offices for the suburbs, the agency has become an accepted, if not unquestioned, fact of life in Fairfax McLean countryside.

County officials seem only too happy to have what Douglas Harman, deputy county executive, sees as "an excellent employment

center" and "a very quiet neighbor." They readily dismiss any negative impact, such as having a large number of county residents who are disinterested in local affairs, as many CIA employees seem to be.

"If you wanted to... you could spend your whole life there—from womb to tomb," claimed former CIA employee Victor Marchetti.

Indeed, the agency provides its employees with a myriad of services right inside its compound. There's a knitting and crochet club, ("It doesn't do much for our 007 image," admits one official), a skeet shooting club called "The Sitting Ducks," and two softball leagues that include teams named "The Good Guys," "Ballbusters," and "Wild Things."

"We're probably the only spy organization in the world that has a chorus that sings Christmas carols to its workers," said another CIA officer. What's more the agency also has a prayer and Bible study group.

Such programs are part of the agency's traditional, avowed paternalism, but some former CIA employees said the programs also breed an insularity that they now find disturbing.

CIA employees are "never tuned into the local scene," grumbles former CIA employee Robert L. Weik, who this month finished last among six Republicans seeking nominations for five seats in the Virginia House of Delegates from the northern Fairfax District.

Weik, who had said he thought his CIA ties would help him in the primary, thinks otherwise now. His CIA colleagues, who he expected might support him, "are completely oriented to Uganda, not Reston," he grouches.

Although the unveiling of highway traffic signs pointing to the CIA complex created a small stir in 1973, the McLean city directory has yet to acknowledge the agency's presence. Many of the town's residents list their occupations as "U.S. Gov't.," which longtime residents say is a sure indication they work for the CIA.

Few county officials let that worry them. "I don't spend any time worrying where they work," says Fairfax County Supervisor Rufus Phillips, who represents a district that includes the agency and once worked for the CIA.

"It means absolutely nothing," agrees County Planning Commission Chairman Edward C. Gurski, who works for the agency in a position he won't discuss.

The CIA's presence in Fairfax "is no different from that of Ft. Belvoir (Army post) or the U.S. Geological Survey (headquartered in Reston)," Gurski says.

Just how many people in this county of an estimated 557,500 have ties to the CIA isn't known. The agency doesn't release any employment figures and county officials can't recall if they ever asked.

A Falls Church lawyer, arguing for a zoning change in McLean, did ask about 10 years ago and "went through all kinds of shenanigans" before calling the Russian embassy. "I made out as a cab driver and got some figure," recalls Lytton H. Gibson, the lawyer.

Gibson was claiming that the area around the CIA was well developed and that a highrise apartment complex would be in order. Although he can't recall the figure given him by the Russians, county officials granted his client the zoning change. (News reports at the time said the Russian told him the current figure of 3,500 would eventually expand to 11,000.)

Today the CIA is, by all estimates, one of the biggest industries in Fairfax and one county officials concede they know little about. "Really, we have very little to do with them," says county executive Robert W. Wilson.

By law that's the way it's supposed to be. The CIA isn't supposed to be involved in domestic spying, but the Rockefeller Commission, which investigated charges that the agency violated its charter, had to look no further than Fairfax City to find a violation.

In 1971 Fairfax City police helped CIA agents break into a photographic studio owned by a former part-time CIA employee. Commonwealth's Attorney Rob-

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